2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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Bribri

614 Kipirjk-uak, Edible fruit of a vine clan.
Amu-kir-uak, Agave-patch clan.
616 Tsiru-ru-uak, Ripe chocolatē-bean clan.
Uni-uak.
Sibri-uak, Forked post water or ravine clan.
Dauibri-uak, Ravine clan.
Amuk-uak, Agave-patch clan.
Akter-uak, Rocky-place clan.
Kur-ki-uak, Name of place at the headwaters of the Uren clan.
Kacha-ut-uak, Achiote clan.
Bobri-uak, Name of a place at the headwaters of the Uren clan.

776 Pittier, who has published a brief paper on the folklore of the Bribri and the Brunka,[2b] states that their primitive supreme god was named *Sibú*, and was surrounded by secondary divinities called *Sörkurà*, *Jàburu*, and *Surá*, some of them good, others evil, both eternally tricking each other. All men were born from seeds, over 773 which the deities fought. The sacred seeds were kept in baskets which *Sibú* gave into the care of the benevolent gods. The evil deities, however, continually sought for the seeds, and this was the origin of a series of adventures which are still narrated by the surviving pagan Bribri. The skunk is the trickster of Bribri mythology.

796 the Immaculate Conception is carried, in the procession, by four women picked by the priest. A food bazaar is held in the church yard, and the only ancient vestige that can be seen is the dance of the *negritos* (see p. 29), who generally precede the procession, but sometimes appear later in the day. This variation depends upon the priest. Frequently, the priest feels that the dance is too pagan and should not be performed in the solemn march.

771 **Superstitions and Beliefs.** There are certain superstitions and beliefs peculiar to the *Boruca* which may be associated with their former credence. When planting, the Indians 241 water the newly sown seeds with water mixed with soil from the cemetery. This is supposed to keep the rats and other rodents from eating the seeds. All the Indians are afraid of thunder, 821 believing that it is closely allied with bad luck. When it thunders in the hills on the east side of the Diquis or Térraba River, the *Boruca* say that a large snake is moving his tail. This snake used to live near El Sapo, in these hills, but when Monseñor Thiel, the former Archbishop of Costa Rica, passed through this region on one of his missionary trips, the snake moved, from fear of the Archbishop, to the headwaters of the Balsar River, west of the Diquis River. Here he is today, in a very steep and isolated spot where no one can find him.

When it thunders toward the south, they claim that the two pejibaye palms which grow on the summit of the Hill of the Sorcerer are angry. The wind that blows at night is a soul 825 in pain. It is interesting that the Indians still 773 tell, and actually believe, that without the help of the *sukia*[36a] there would not now be game around Boruca, and so, of course, all the people would have died. They say that eighteen years ago there was no game in the vicinity. A *sukia* from Talamanca was summoned. He went to a high mountain which lies south of the present village of Boruca. This mountain is called "El Cerro del Encanto," or "Hill of the Sorcerer." A great noise was heard. When he returned, there were many wild peccary in the neighborhood. They still recount and believe that "Tatica Cuazarn," the mythical sorcerer who lives on the Hill of the Sorcerer, used to visit Boruca

[36a] See below.

825 and drink and eat with the people. He was
773 always dressed as an old man, and none knew him on these visits. He came incognito so that he could find out what in truth was passing amongst his people. Although the Indians say that formerly the Hill was a gathering place for their secret tribal meetings, no Indians will go there today, even though there are supposedly wild cattle there, and cattle are economicaly very important to the *Boruca*. This cattle is held to be the property of "Tatica Cuazarn," and cannot be touched. The *Boruca* recount that one of them went to the Hill hunting, and saw a man bathing. He started to shoot the man, but his gun wouldn't go off. This man was, of course, "Tatica Cuazarn." Cuazarn has a son who is called Sankrao, and who lives in the mountains of Golfo Dulce.

778 North and west of Boruca, there are certain lagoons which the Indians do not like to pass, and never will go by them if they are accompanied by dogs. One of these lagoons is the "Laguna de Danta." Here, "Mamram" is supposed to dwell. "Mamram" in Boruca signifies witchery.

224 If one goes hunting, it is not good to say to him, "God be with you," because one will have bad luck.

756 **Sickness, Curing, and Shamanism.** Shamanism as such is not practised any longer amongst the *Boruca*. Formerly the *Boruca* had real shamans, whom they called *bruk-bri*, but they have long since disappeared. The power of the shaman, however, is still respected, and when a grave sickness appears, or a great misfortune affects the tribe or village, the *bruk-bri* is sent for from some of the *Talamanca* peoples, chiefly the *Cabécares*. These peoples call the shaman, *sukia*, and the one who travels to Boruca is known as the *cacique sukia*, the title being derived from the word for shaman and the widespread Costa Rican word for chieftain. The *cacique sukia* is held in deadly respect by the Indians. Chicha, as well as the most attractive girl in town are offered to him on his visits. When curing, the *sukia* stays outside behind the
[755] house, all night, and smokes incessantly. He then enters and blows smoke on the patient. The *sukia* does not accept money, and only at times will take presents of a pig or food.

[p. 25-B]

●773 Very little remains in the field of legends or myths. Certain ones, told as recently as the time of Pittier, for example, "El Encanto,"[40] are now forgotten. The tales which are still told appear for the most part to be unfinished, half-remembered stories, and are, to a great extent, crude and unsatisfactory. The writer found that the telling of legends was similar, in a measure, to the gathering of language data. Few people remembered details, and no [124] two people agreed on all details. The fundamental note in the tales collected is the im- [754] portance placed on witchcraft, in spite of the fact that the *Borucas* like to give the impression that they no longer believe nor remember anything about witchery. The following are four myths which are still told by the *Boruca* Indians.

539 **The "Mamram."** These are two bewitched women. They were orphaned girls who were from Boruca, and who used to fish the crabs and the crayfish in the creek which runs through the town. Each day, as they exhausted one spot, they moved a bit further along the water course, until one day they disappeared completely and did not return.

The shamans, however, found the girls, and tied them up, then moved them to Barranco. You know they are there today, because you can see the stones of their hearth. Their bodies are covered with hair, and they are ugly, not only in appearance, but also in character. They are very mean, and have bothered people so much in the vicinity, that more than one community has had to move. The last place they destroyed was Camakrán by Paso Caracol.

The Grandfather of the Volcano. A long time ago, the grandfather of the volcano fell in love with a girl and took care of her. She became pregnant. He brought her partridges, wild turkeys, *paweeles*, wild hogs, wild pigs, and deer. The girl had a son, and she took care of him and raised him until he was six. Then the father came with a great wind and took the boy from his mother, and carried him to his house.

The father continued to visit the mother nightly, however, bringing her dried meat.

[40] Pittier, 1941, pp. 93–94.

4:Pittier de Fabrega B-5 (ca. 1900) 1903
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101 of the Tarraria, and to the small and somewhat intermixed colony of
131 Térraba in the Diquis Valley, on the Pacific slope. On this latter side of the country and south of the Huétaru were the *Quepos* and the *Brunka* or *Cotos;* the first have now disappeared entirely, and may have belonged to the Huétaru stock. The Brunka still number
[162] from 300 to 400, and live together in the comparatively flourishing settlement of Boruca, near Térraba, in the Diquis Valley.

The Bribri have been the object of my special attention for some
114 years past, and among them I have collected most of the legends
773 and traditions I am now preparing for publication. Nos. 1–5 of the following tales belong to them. Nos. 6 and 7 have been obtained from the Brunka. Nos. 1–6 have their origin in the heathen past of our Indians, while the legend of Don Pedro Cascante belongs evidently to a period when the Christian influence had already made itself felt. Nos. 1–4 give us an idea as to what the primitive religion of our
[176] Costa Rican Indian was like: a supreme and almighty God, *Sibú*, surrounded by secondary divinities, *Sórkuru*, *Jáburu*, etc., some of them good, others evil ones, and both eternally playing tricks upon
773 each other. The notion of all men having been born from seeds like the plants is original and possibly new, as well as the continuous fighting of the genii, good and bad, for the possession of these seeds. No. 4 is especially interesting because of the rôle played by the
[171] skunk, that favorite and artful trickster of the North American In-
[825] dian legends. Among the Bribri and Cabécara Indians, the skunk is also a prototype of cunning and subtlety, and he figures in several other tales which I have heard, but have not been able yet to record.

I. HOW JABURU ATE THE SEED[1] OF OUR KIN.

589 Surá, the good God, had gone to see his cornfield. While he was
[776] away, Jáburu, the evil One, came and ate the seed of our kin which the almighty Sibú had given Surá to take care of. When Surá returned home, Jáburu murdered him, and buried his corpse in a hole behind the house; on the grave he planted a cacao-tree and a calabash-tree.

Then Sibú, the almighty God, resolved also to kill Jáburu. Moving away, he went to Jáburu's house, and talked to him: "O Thou, uncle of mine, let us have our chocolate!" But Jáburu replied: "I

[1] According to the traditions of our Costa Rican Indians, every man or animal was originally born from a seed like that of a plant. The seeds of the several races of man were kept in baskets which were intrusted by Sibú to the keeping of the good deities. The evil ones, on the other hand, were constantly hunting for them, and this was the origin of continuous incidents, the relation of which has come down to the heathen Indians of to-day in the form of legends like the present one.

4:Pittier de Fabrega B-5 (ca. 1900) 1903
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539 they discovered the way over the cordillera. They got to the other side, and there they found out that the hogs had turned into men like themselves. And these are the *Brunka*[1] people.

III. THE TALE OF OUR DYING AWAY.

773 Our forefathers told us that in far-away times, when we lived in other countries, the gods allowed us to be eaten by birds and animals.

539 Once upon a time, when many of our people were playing on a plain, there came flying a mighty eagle, and he caught one of our kin and blood, and threw him into a large basket he was carrying. He carried him away to the top of the Kamuk,[2] where he fell asleep, because he was very tired. At that time the eagle never thought of eating up our kinsman. On the morn, he flew again, carrying off his prey far away to the peak of Nëmósul, where he rested, without thinking yet of eating him. Again he flew away, far away, and got to the ridge of Nëmóie, where he met with powerful jaguars. And he told them how he had brought the man. One of the jaguars then proposed to him that they should eat the man together. The eagle consented, and they ate him. They ate him, and after that, the eagle flew up, high up to the top of Nëmóie. And this is the reason

773 why we see white spots near the top of Nëmóie; they are the bones

[823] of our kinsman, and there it was that man was eaten for the first time by birds and animals, because the jaguar taught the eagle how to eat him. Our forefathers also used to say that on the same ridge of Nëmóie there are stones shaped like jaguars. Whenever any one goes there, those stones become alive and true jaguars, because they are not stones at all, but bad spirits.

Such is the tale of our forefathers, and they also used to say, that once upon a time strange men became a prey to the jaguars, on that same ridge of Nëmóie. And this is why we are not permitted to live in these dangerous places.

IV. HOW SIBÓ KILLED SÓRKURA.

539 Sórkura was in the habit of drinking the water of a spring in which the skunk used to ease his body. Sibó, the almighty God, thought it would be well that Sórkura should kill the skunk. And so it happened: Sórkura went to watch the skunk, killed it, and hung its dead body to dry on the fire, since it was a prophet of ill-

[1] Brunka is the Indian name for Térraba, the Tirub colony in the Diquis Valley.

[133] [2] Kamuk or Pico Blanco is the most conspicuous peak of the Talamanca mountains; it is 2914 m. above sea-level, according to Gabb. Nëmósul and Nëmóie are two secondary summits, the first at the entrance of the Coen Valley, the second on the ridge between the Estrella and Tararia basins.

4:Pittier de Fabrega B-5 (ca. 1900) 1903
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there was standing a man of stately appearance. He asked, "Here I am; how art thou?" The other answered, "Well; why didst thou come here?" And he told how he had shot at a tapir, and had lost it. Then the man of the house went on, and said, "Why dost thou shoot to play? When thou shootest, do it so as to kill, so that the poor beast does not fall a prey to the worms. But I see thou art tired, so come in and have a seat." And he brought him *chicha*, and gave him to eat the meat of the tapir at which the hunter had shot without effect, but which the owner of the house had killed. 539

And when he had rested, drunk, and eaten, the hunter said that he had visited his host. But this one replied, "There, take thou this piece of cane, and plant it at thine home, and when the cane has grown its full growth again, then, but not until then, shalt thou be able to speak once more."

When the hunter got to his house, he could not utter even a word, so he planted the cane; and it grew, and when it had attained its full height, then the hunter could talk again, and he told all that had happened to him.

The man in whose house the hunter had been was the king of the tapirs, and this is why he treated him so.

VI. THE KING OF THE WILD HOGS.

Among the beasts, the wild hogs also have a king. He is to all appearance like a very white and good-looking fellow, who goes through the woods with a big stick in his hand. He lives in an enchanted place on the heights of San-krá-ua, and his door is guarded by a huge tiger. 773 825

The king of the hogs is displeased when the Indians wound his subjects without killing them at once. Once upon a time there was in Boruca one of those bad hunters who had the reputation of being a bad archer, and who always wounded the animals, but never killed them. One day he went into the woods, and met with a large herd of hogs, after which he ran and ran, without being able to reach them. When he paid attention to the place he had got into, he saw that he had gone astray. Then he went ahead until he came into the presence of the king of the hogs, who caught him by the throat and said, "Why dost thou hurt all my hogs without ever killing them? Now thou shalt suffer for it, because thou shalt remain in my hands until thou hast healed them all." And there he stayed for a long time, healing hogs; and at the beginning they did not let him heal them, but came upon him to bite. So that he suffered a thousand deaths, until they were cured a little, and became so tame as to follow him everywhere. [224] 539

When there were no more hogs to cure, the king called our

4:Pittier de Fabrega B-5 (ca. 1900) 1903
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539 Brunka to his presence, and told him he could go, and to be careful not to wound hogs again without killing them. He also marked in his presence all the hogs he would be at liberty to kill. And the man went away through the woods, until he got to Krámra-us,[1] where he met with a few of his kinsmen who were hunting hogs. When they saw the man who used to cure them, the hogs always ran to him, and never would go away, so that he could easily kill all those which had been marked for him. And he always advised his companions never to wound animals, but to kill them right away.

VII. DON PEDRO CASCANTE.

(Legend of the hollow trail of El Pito.[2])

487 In very remote times, when the Spaniards had not yet arrived in
773 these countries, the Indians only could climb up from the coast of Quepos to the high mountains of Dota by following the long and
[481] tiresome ridge of El Pito, bound together by means of the royal vine into files of ten to twenty, and pulled by witchcraft without any effort from their side. But, also, on each journey one man disappeared without the others being aware when or how, and that was the toll they paid for the dreaded ascent.

539 This great calamity had lasted for numberless years, and the trail to El Pito became deeper and narrower from day to day, on account of the way they had to go over it, bound together in long files, when a very holy missionary father left Cartago, riding a strong white mule, to go and win over the Indians. And as he was going down to the coast through the fearful road of El Pito, he met the "Encanto" which had taken the form of a big turkey, and would not get out of the road to let the holy man pass. Then the father became very angry; he alighted from his mule, bound the turkey with a blessed string, and dragged him down hill until they got to the place called "Alto de los Cotos." There he tied him to a large tree which he blessed, and told him that he would stay there up to the day of the final doom. And from that day hence, the "Encanto" never again annoyed the passers-by.

Only a certain Pedro Cascante, who had a large breeding-farm of mules and cattle, down on the plain of "El Calicanto," allowed himself to become a prey to his avarice, and on account of it, he lost his soul.

Cascante had become very rich by carrying out to San Marcos the

[103]

[1] Krámra-us, name of a place on the lower Diquís.

[2] This trail, so deeply cut into the ridge of El Pito as to be tunnel-like at a few places, leads from San Marcos, once one of the principal residences of the Quepos Indians, down to the coastal plains of the Pacific.

6;Stone E-5 (1956-1959)1962
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[P.51(1)] Cabecar Bribri

538 The "histories" or legends of the Cabécares
●773 and Bribri are numerous. By reviewing them we can gather some of their fundamental theology in spite of the influence of Christian missionaries and contacts with non-indigenous cultures. The Indians themselves refer to these stories as histories and do not like the word tale or legend. To them, they are still something sacred and apart and on the whole are known only to the *jawá* or older men. They are recounted to aspirants, and occasionally around the fire during nights of interminable winter rain. It is interesting that histories dealing with subjects such as the soul, the creation of the world, etc., are usually Cabécar by origin although accepted by the Bribri. Secular tales recounting the reason for the appearance or the voice of certain animals are generally Bribri.

776 **Theological Beliefs.** At the root of Talamanca religion, there is one powerful god, *sibu*, who, as Lehmann notes, has at least twenty different names.[100] He is good and is responsible for the good in the world. He is everywhere. When he is with non-Indians he dresses with shoes, etc., but with Indians he does as they do. He speaks all languages and taught people how to do everything.

[773] The role of *sibu* is akin to that of an artist or architect. He thought of man and he made us through *suLá* while he, *sibu*, was thinking
775 of them. The good and bad people all go to *sibu* when they die if their bones have been sung to (*see* Bone Burial). The soul must wait for this, and if they are never sung to, then a snake eats the bones. The souls of Indians and non-Christians go to the world below, nevertheless. This is why *sibu* took everything
772 from beneath the earth to make place for the
776 Indians there. In this underground domain,
753 there are four worlds. One is for sickness; one for the owners (*dueño*) or protectors of animals; one for Indians; one for the evil spirits. Disease is often sent by the spirit owners or protectors of animals or the animals themselves. This is one reason why the medicine
[756] man has his own and secret name for them.

771 The Talamanca religion on the whole, how-
776

[100] Lehmann, 1920, vol. 1, p. 220.

MYTHS

771 ever, is animistic. Their world is governed by
776 spirits, in spite of the goodness of *sibu*. Many of these are evil; some are bad; and a few are malevolent. At one time or other, most have had connections with *sibu*.

773 According to the Bribri, *sibu*, the great god,
776 had a son, *suLá*, by *sibu ami* (literally, god mother). *suLá* was responsible for teaching the cultivation of plantains and maize and the making of chicha. He also taught the people how to build circular houses (*palenques*). He is credited with placing the Bribri in Talamanca and the Changuinas, Térrabas (Terribís) and Brunkas (Borucas) in their respective locations. Among the Bribri, he is responsible for
[614] the *uniwak* clan whose name signifies clan, "seed or race," of the vessel (pot). The name came about because *suLá* ordered this group to
[775] go afte death underneath a pot (*un*), turned upside down, and thus reach their heaven which is underground.

776 Certain evil spirits are common to the Cabécar and Bribri and dominate their lives. The most important is known in both tongues as *bé* or *ṗą* and in Spanish as the devil. He is able to kill as well as be a maldoer. People believe that he is omnipotent, living in all parts at all times. Another very powerful devil is *bukLú* (*see* Tabus) who seems to be many devils but can be taken as one. People have been carried away and eaten by him. He and the *tǫmí* are guardians of animals. *Lą̀n* or *kiritum* is also a bad devil (*see* Theological Myths: *A Tale of the bukLú*).[1] He can take any form, including the human form, and can be more than one. He makes his home in the air. *kiritum* differs from another "devil" of the Bribri, *kritəbś*, who takes the shape of a dog and walks at night. Another minor group of evil spirits are the *kambra* (*see* Legends: Bribri version of The Sea).[2]

One of the most feared evil spirits is usually called *dinamú* in Cabécar and *díkuṇ* in Bribri, although he is known by other names such as *bák-namú* in Cabécar and *tsirule* in Bribri.[161] He is the same as a bad water spirit named *díkuṇ*, in Bribri, who lives in the sea, enters rivers, and drinks human blood.

Formerly, there was another very evil spirit, *miguchké*. He killed the wife of Thunder and

[1 [see category 116, ¶64. Analyst.]
[2 [see category 116, ¶56. Analyst.]

535 example, *burére* is performed by a line of men; *buriki* is with men and women in the same line; *buLtakuLe* is usually a line of men but there may be one of women. When one sex dances, the arm is interlocked at the elbow with the next in line. Women and men put their hand on the shoulder of the person in front. The single line step is the first one used in the circle dance. Twenty people or less participate in these lines. The drum is held under the arms [533] of the male dancers. Females do not play them.

535 773 The common dances among the Bribri are those of the buzzard and the monkey. Each has its own explanation. The first one is said to have originated because the boss of the buzzards went to *sibu* to learn to sing and dance. He learned and came to earth wearing a collar and showed man how to sing and dance (*see* Theological Myths: *The Dance*). Some versions hold that it was *sibu* himself in the form of a buzzard who did this and not the boss of these birds. He wore a collar and taught human beings to dance in a circle because the buzzards after eating fly in a circle.[206] When he finished his task, he retired to where the sun lives.

The monkey dance is supposed to have been taught to man by the grandfather of the Congo monkey who learned this from *sibu*. Its prime purpose is to have man happy (*see* Lay Songs: *buL-ikLək*).

535 342 Another celebration to do with happiness and good luck is seen in Talamanca among the Bribri when a new home is to be occupied.

532 The whole ceremony is known as *itsó* (*see* Songs), taking its name from the *disaplina* palm (*itsó* or *kɨmat* in Bribri; *Chamaedorea* sp.) from which the mask is made today. The beard of the face is Spanish moss. After the inauguration of a house, the mask, which is supposed to assure the longevity of the family who are to inhabit the new home, is hidden and the celebrants have to hunt for it before the dance can be performed.

535 224 533 Segarra and Julía[207] describe a hunter's

[206] This interpretation of God in buzzard form wearing a collar is reflected in the gold figures found in ancient graves. The style and form of the collars associated with these figures are similar to the bead ones used today by the Guaymí Indians of northwestern Panama.
[776] [172] [171]

535 dance which was performed in a circle by men
224 and women with one person singing but the
533 whole group joining in the chorus. The song recounted the experiences during a hunt.

535 There are various dances held in connection
[764] with death and burial but they are seldom seen
184 today outside of upper Talamanca.

Pittier[366] mentions a bone dance performed
[765] at the time of secondary burial by men if the deceased was an adult and by women if a child. The bone dance witnessed by the writer was carried out by a line of women and one of men. The person taking the place of the
[533] Singer (*see* Death) chanted the life history of the departed, and kept time with a gourd rattle. His four assistants in the line of men had drums under their arms which they beat as they danced.

[756] A different bone dance which is a remnant
727 of a war dance with trophy heads is occasionally performed when the medicine man is feeling particularly sure of himself and wants to celebrate. Men and women form a circle with interlocked arms. It is said that skulls were
[178] once balanced on the arms. Today, nothing is placed there. The men sing and the women join in the chorus singing *ékéké* meaning "good" or "well."

533 **Songs.** All sacred songs are basically Cabécar even though they may be sung in Bribri. The Medicine Man and sometimes the Burier
[198] sing these songs which are usually in ancient Cabécar and are not understood by the masses.

Lay songs are common to the Bribri and very rare among the Cabécar. The Bribri delight in inventing songs to fit the occasion. Both men and women like to sing and do so on the slightest provocation when working, bathing, washing, or minding the baby. The addition of words only for their sound is
[197] characteristic. Likewise, many Térraba words are found in Bribri songs, the meaning of which is unknown to the singer. In fact, the
[195] sung language permits all sorts of liberties as well as having a certain vocabulary of its own.

[773] western Panama. The traditional home of the Bribri
173 is in northwest Panama. *See* Stone, 1952, p. 252.

[366] Segarra y Julia, 1907, pp. 594–95.

[366] Pittier, 1938, pp. 25–26.